(b) what are the sectors of economy in which the US industrialists showed interest in investment in India and which of the means have been thrown open for foreign investors'; and

(c) whether Government have agreed to open the insurance and financial service sector to the foreign companies; if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) During the talks with US Commerce Secretary on 16.1.95 prospects of expanding Indo-US trade and commercial relations were discussed. Reference was made to Indo-US bilateral agreement on textiles, successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round and establishment of WTO? Use of countervailing and anti-dumping duties as non-tariff barriers, visa restrictions imposed by US on movement of software businessmen, economic reforms process in India and agreement to set up Indo US Commercial Alliance were some of the other important areas covered during the talks.

(b) US industrialists showed interest in investments mainly in the power, telecommunications, agri-business, transport and other infrastructure sectors. Foreign investment in these sectors is permitted as per Government policies.

(c) During the visit of U.S. Commerce Secretary, no special agreement on these issues was concluded.

Proposal to sell Tea Gardens of the tea Trading Corporation

864. SHRI S. MADHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to sell the Tea gardens taken over by the Tea Trading Corporation;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government will consider developing those Tea gardens instead of selling them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) In view of the continuing losses incurred by the Gardens Division of the Corporation, It has been decided to dispose of all five gardens vested in Tea Trading Corporation of India.

Setting up of plants for export of Tobacco Products in Gujarat

865. SHRIMATI ANANDIBEN JETHABHI PATEL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that foreign businessmen in the Tobacco sector are setting up plants in the State of Gujarat to make tobacco products suitable for 100 percent export;

(b) if so, whether the availability of raw material in the State has been studied by Government;

(c) if so, the details, thereof; and

(d) the involvement of the Central Tobacco Research Institute in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No such proposal has been approved.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Scaling down of operations of Coffee Board

866. SHRI G. Y. KRISHNAN:

SHRI SURESH KALMADI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to scale down Coffee Board's operations with a view to deregiularisrag Coffee trade.

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) its impact on the retrenchment of the Coffee Board's employees and the amount likely to be paid to them under

the voluntary retirement scheme, as per Government's deeision; and

(d) the repercussions of the abolition be the Internal Safes Quota oh ihe Coffee industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): ta) and (b) After the introduction of free sale quota under which the growers are allowed to sell upto 50 per cent of their produce with out pooling with the Coffce Board, the marketing activities of the Coffee Board has reduced. However, other activities of the Coffee Board remain the same.

(e) There has been no retrenchment of Coffee Board employees. However, a Voluntary Retirement Scheme has been introduced for the employees of the Marketing Division of Coffee Board under which a total amount of Rs. 43.80 crores is likely to be spent. But this amount will vary depending upon the number of employees opting for Voluntary Retirement Scheme.

(d) The internal safe qaota upto 30 par cent of the produce which was introduced during 1992-93 has been replaced in 1994 by a Free Sale Quota Upto '50 per cent of produce; This enable the growers to sell their coffee both in domestic and external markets unlike the internal sale quota tinder Which they could sell their produce only in the domestic market. This has given a thrust for higher exports.

Import of Rubber

867. SHRI M. A. BABY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided ot import rubber;

(b) if so, what is the quantum to be imported and whether the Government are thinking of including rubber under OGL; and

(c) what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) Through a Public Notice on 2-3-1995 Government has allowed Import of 10;000 MTs of Natural Rubber at nil duty upto 31-8-1995. Natural Rubber is, at present, in the negative list of imports. Trade Policy changes is a continual excersise in response to changes in the international and national economic situations.

Export, and Imports

SS8. SHRI SOM PAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the figures of exports and imports during the current year so far both in terms of dollars as well as rupees:

(b) what is the item-wise break-up of these and growth of fall in absolute and percentage terms over the same period during the past year; and

(c) what are the main items of exports that have shown encouraging results and what is being done to promote their exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The figures of exports and imports during April-January, 1994-95, the latest period for such data are available in the current year are as follow:

	Exports		Imports
Rs. Crores:	65482.99	..	71247.90
US $ Million:	20871.01	..	22708.42

(b) Latest period for which itemwise break-up of exports and imports are available relate to April-December, 1994, in the current year. These have been published in the Brochure 'Foreign Trade Statistics off India (Principal Commodities and Countries, December, 1994). Copies of this Brochure are available in the Lok Sabha Library.

(c) Exports Of major products/groups wtoieh have shown encouraging feSHlts